



CHÊNE BLEU



HÉLOÏSE & ABÉLARD

A MEDIEVAL LOVE STORY

Abélard and Héloïse are one of history's most celebrated couples, known for their intellectual brilliance, passionate love affair, eloquent letters and the tragedy that cruelly separated them, sometimes referred to as "the Romeo and Juliet of France," they were actually far more complex, accomplished individuals, and their love spanned many decades until the end of their lives, making it a symbol of enduring romantic love.

Their story begins in 12th-century Paris when intellectually gifted and beautiful young Héloïse, who is the pride of her uncle, canon Fulbert, becomes the private student of Pierre Abélard (1007-1121), a renowned French philosopher and theologian, considered one of the greatest thinkers of his time. Abélard's teachings are controversial, and he will be repeatedly charged with heresy later in life, but students are drawn to his lectures from all over Europe. (To this day he remains the most distinguished philosopher of the Middle Ages.)

Though 20 years her senior, Abélard is captivated by Héloïse's beauty, education and intelligence, and they become lovers, a relationship destined to change their lives forever. Eventually, canon Fulbert discovers their love affair and separates them. Realizing she is pregnant, Héloïse leaves in secret to have the child, whom she names Astralabe. Abélard asks for forgiveness and permission to marry Héloïse. They marry secretly,

but fearing for her safety, Héloïse retreats to a nunnery in Argenteuil. Misconstruing this move as a sign that Abélard has cast her off, the uncle contrives a plot to protect his niece's dignity and punish Abélard. So he sends his kinsmen to attack Abélard in the middle of the night and castrate him.

Abélard's humiliation compels him to give up his teaching at Notre Dame and both lovers take Holy Orders. Héloïse submits to a religious life for which she feels no calling, but becomes the most important abbess of her time. Years later, after Abélard writes his famous Historia Calamitatum, Héloïse is moved to write her first letter to him, which remains an unsurpassed expression of passion and devotion. They continue their correspondence until Abélard's death, and their letters are never destroyed so they are kept and eventually published. Their story has been retold through the ages, from "Le Roman de la Rose" to Shakespeare to Cole Porter.

Chêne Bleu's flagship red wines are named after this extraordinary couple. The complex, brooding Grenache blend seemed worthy of Abélard, who combined erudition with deep thinking and a near-fatal attraction. The perfumed, intense but more restrained character of their Syrah blend reminded them of Héloïse, whose intellect was matched by passion which, though bridled, never died.



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